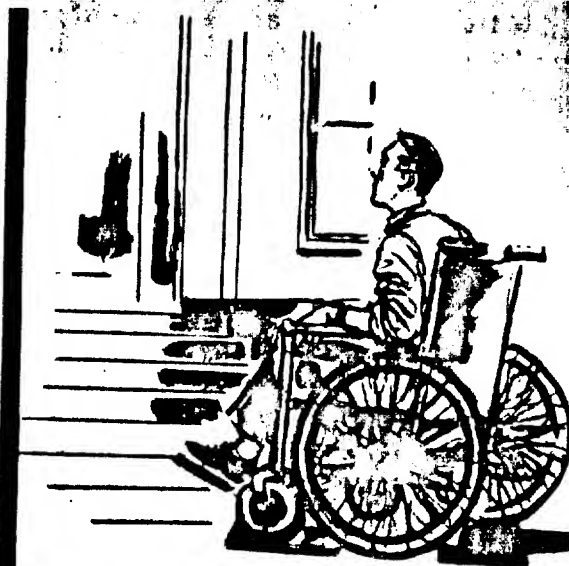


The President's Committee on
Employment of the Physically Handicapped

The National Society for
Crippled Children and Adults

ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS AND THE HANDICAPPED



"An architectural barrier I face...."

THE PROBLEM

"For those of us with limited mobility, architectural barriers prevent free access to those buildings which we must enter to work, to vote, to worship, to learn, to play, or even to buy a stamp.

"To fulfill our responsibilities as citizens, we often must circumvent these barriers by entering through the rear door, where freight is hauled in and garbage hauled out, and make our way through coal bins, storerooms, and boiler rooms to reach a freight elevator which can accommodate our wheelchairs.

"Architectural barriers have made us 'back door' citizens."

--Charles E. Caniff

"Handicapped American of the Year" for 1960

There are no barriers that say "Handicapped Keep Out." Instead, there are the barriers of thoughtlessness such as these:

Imposing flights of stairs that the man or woman in a wheelchair, or wearing braces or with a heart condition, could not possibly climb.

Rest rooms with facilities not suitable for wheelchairs.

Telephone booths too narrow for a wheelchair to enter; telephones with no amplifying device for the deaf.

Hazardous doorways leading to boiler room, incinerator or the like, with no sense-of-touch markings for the blind.

[A jointly sponsored project, with the American Standards Association, to make public buildings, other structures, and facilities accessible to the handicapped.]

If the handicapped cannot enter buildings and other structures, they cannot hope to hold jobs there. Nor can they hope to conduct their affairs there.

If somehow they do get inside but cannot use rest rooms or other facilities, the barriers are still there.

The problem, however, lies deeper than definitions. It has to do with the old American precept of equality. How can the handicapped claim full equality of opportunity, if buildings are barred to them?

THE SIZE OF IT

Some may think this is a problem for only a few; but we are speaking not about hundreds of men and women, but of millions:



5,000,000 with heart conditions.

250,000 in wheelchairs.

200,000 with heavy leg braces.

139,000 with artificial limbs.

plus

16,500,000 men and women over 65 who would benefit by easier access to buildings.

Actually, all citizens would gain from easier accessibility to buildings and other structures. Ramps are more pleasant than steep staircases--and much safer. Wider telephone booths would be a boon to all. What benefits the handicapped benefits the able-bodied.

THE SOLUTION

With sponsorship of the President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped and the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, and under the auspices of the American Standards Association, a set of standard specifications has just been developed titled:

"Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to, and Usable by, the Physically Handicapped."

But specifications, no matter how sound, remain words on paper until they're put into effect. Architects, builders, city planners, government officials at local and State and Federal levels, opinion molders, the Man on the Street -- virtually everyone must be convinced that the standards are more than worthwhile, that they are essential.

Only then will blueprints be translated into action.

Among the specifications:

Grading and landscaping. Ground should be graded, "even contrary to existing topography," so that at least one entrance to a new building is at ground level.

Parking. Space should be set aside and identified for use of those who need wheelchairs, braces or crutches, so they need not wheel or walk behind parked cars.

Entrances. At least one entrance should be usable by those in wheelchairs, an entrance on a level giving access to elevators.

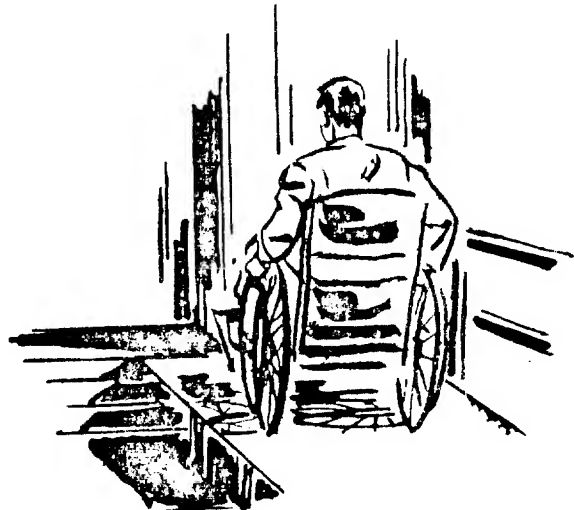
Ramps. If ramps are needed, the slope should be no greater than one foot rise in twelve feet. A non-slip surface, at least one handrail, a level platform at the top, and at least six feet of straight clearance at the bottom are chief requirements for ramps.

Stairs. Risers of no more than seven inches and round "nosings", rather than square ones which can trip the unwary climber, are imperative.

Doors. Needed are doors at least thirty-two inches wide, with thresholds flush with the floor. Double doors are generally too difficult to open from wheelchairs. Automatic doors are excellent.

Rest rooms. At least one stall in each rest room should be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, and mirrors and shelves should be set low enough to be used by those in wheelchairs.

Water fountains. Spouts and controls should be in front. Conventional coolers are satisfactory if a small fountain is mounted on the side thirty inches above the floor.



Telephones. Telephones should be installed within reach of those in wheelchairs. Also, an appropriate number should be equipped for the hard-of-hearing.

Elevators. The floor level at which the handicapped enter the building should give access to the elevators.

Identification. To help the blind, rooms or offices should be identified by raised numbers or letters. Doors not intended for normal use and which might prove dangerous should be quickly identifiable by touch. For example, door handles and knobs can be knurled.

Warning signals. Both flashing lights and sound signals should be used as warnings of danger for both the deaf and the blind.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Architects can see to it that these specifications are incorporated in buildings they're designing, or in modifying existing structures.

Contractors can work with architects and others in making certain that the specifications become part of buildings they're erecting or remodeling.

Building code authorities can take steps to incorporate the specifications in building codes.

City, State and county officials can take action to incorporate the specifications in any public buildings under their jurisdiction.

The general public -- you and you and you -- can let your wishes be known. You can tell responsible officials that you want these specifications to be made part of all buildings. You can let them know you are in favor of any means and any programs which result in broader equality for the handicapped of your community.

Remember--it is much easier to construct buildings without architectural barriers than it is to eliminate them afterwards.

✓ WHERE TO GET THE SPECIFICATIONS

You may obtain a single free copy of the specifications by writing either:

The President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped, Washington 25, D. C., or

The National Society for Crippled Children & Adults, 2023 West Ogden Street, Chicago 12, Ill.

Copies may also be obtained from the American Standards Association, 10 East 40th Street, New York 18, N. Y., at \$1.00 per copy. Discounts are available on quantity orders.

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